

Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree

Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree is a Scottish fairy tale collected by Joseph Jacobs in his *Celtic Fairy Tales*.^[1] It is Aarne-Thompson type 709, Snow White. Others of this type include Bella Venezia, Nourie Hadig, *La petite Toute-Belle* and *Myrsina*.^[2]

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Plot

A king had a wife, Silver-Tree, and a daughter, Gold-Tree. One day they walked by a pond, and Silver-Tree asked a trout if she were the most beautiful queen in the world, whereupon the trout said that Gold-Tree was more beautiful. Silver-Tree took to her bed and declared she would never be well unless she ate Gold-Tree's heart and liver. A king's son had asked to marry Gold-Tree, so her father agreed and sent them off; then he gave his wife the heart and liver of a he-goat, at which she got up from her bed.

Silver-Tree went back to the trout, which told her Gold-Tree was still more beautiful, and living abroad with a prince. Silver-Tree begged a ship of her husband to visit her daughter. The prince was away hunting; Gold-Tree was terrified at the sight of the ship. The servants locked her away in a room so she could tell her mother she could not come out. Silver-Tree persuaded her to put her little finger through the keyhole, so she could kiss it, and when Gold-Tree did, Silver-Tree stuck a poisoned thorn into it.

When the prince returned, he was grief-stricken, and could not persuade himself to bury Gold-Tree, because she was so beautiful. He kept her body in a room. Having married for a second time, he would not let his new wife into the room. One day, he forgot the key, and the new wife went in. She tried to wake Gold-Tree, and found the thorn in her finger. Pulling it out, she revived Gold-Tree. Because of the wakened one's identity, the second wife offered to leave, but their husband refused to allow it.

Silver-Tree went back to the trout, who told her what had happened. Silver-Tree took the ship again. The prince was hunting again, but the second wife said that the two of them must meet her. Silver-Tree offered a poisoned drink. The second wife said that it was the custom that the person who offered the drink drank of it first. Silver-Tree put the drink to her mouth, and the second wife struck her arm so that some went into her throat. She fell down dead.

The prince, Gold-Tree, and the second wife lived happily thereafter.

Commentary and variants

Folklorist Joseph Jacobs commented on variants and motifs of the tale in the *Notes* of his *Celtic Fairy Tales*.^[3] He suggested the migration of the tale from abroad. He also remarked that publisher and Celtic folklorist Alfred Nutt called Jacobs's attention to the Breton *lai* of *Eliduc*.^[4]

See also

- Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
- Udea and her Seven Brothers

References

1. Joseph Jacobs, *Celtic Fairy Tales*, "Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree (<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/authors/jacobs/celtic/goldtree.html>)"
 2. Heidi Anne Heiner, "Tales Similar to Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/sevendwarfs/other.html>)"
 3. Jacobs, Joseph. *Celtic Fairy Tales*. London: David Nutt. 1892. p. 252.
 4. Jacobs, Joseph. *Celtic Fairy Tales*. London: David Nutt. 1892. p. 252 (footnote nr. 1).
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